

merit evaluation by peer review panels comprised of scientists, educators, business representatives, and Government officials. Peer review panels will be selected and structured to provide optimum expertise and objective judgment in the evaluation of proposals.

#### § 3405.15 Evaluation criteria.

The maximum score a proposal can receive is 200 points. Unless otherwise stated in the annual solicitation published in the FEDERAL REGISTER, the peer review panel will consider the following criteria and weights to evaluate proposals submitted:

Evaluation Criterion	Weight
(a) <i>Potential for advancing the quality of education:</i> This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have a substantial impact upon and advance the quality of food and agricultural sciences higher education by strengthening institutional capacities through promoting education reform to meet clearly delineated needs.	
(1) Impact—Does the project address a targeted need area(s)? Is the problem or opportunity clearly documented? Does the project address a State, regional, national, or international problem or opportunity? Will the benefits to be derived from the project transcend the applicant institution and/or the grant period? Is it probable that other institutions will adapt this project for their own use? Can the project serve as a model for others?.	20 points.
(2) Continuation plans—Are there plans for continuation or expansion of the project beyond USDA support? Are there indications of external, non-Federal support? Are there realistic plans for making the project self-supporting?.	10 points.
(3) Innovation—Are significant aspects of the project based on an innovative or a non-traditional approach toward solving a higher education problem or strengthening the quality of higher education in the food and agricultural sciences? If successful, is the project likely to lead to education reform?.	20 points.
(4) Products and results—Are the expected products and results of the project clearly explained? Do they have the potential to strengthen food and agricultural sciences higher education? Are the products likely to be of high quality? Will the project contribute to a better understanding of or improvement in the quality, distribution, effectiveness, or racial, ethnic, or gender diversity of the Nation's food and agricultural scientific and professional expertise base?.	20 points.
(b) <i>Overall approach and cooperative linkages:</i> This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach and the quality of the partnerships likely to evolve as a result of the project.	
(1) Proposed approach—Do the objectives and plan of operation appear to be sound and appropriate relative to the targeted need area(s) and the impact anticipated? Are the procedures managerially, educationally, and/or scientifically sound? Is the overall plan integrated with or does it expand upon other major efforts to improve the quality of food and agricultural sciences higher education? Does the timetable appear to be readily achievable?.	20 points.
(2) Evaluation—Are the evaluation plans adequate and reasonable? Do they allow for continuous and/or frequent feedback during the life of the project? Are the individuals involved in project evaluation skilled in evaluation strategies and procedures? Can they provide an objective evaluation? Do evaluation plans facilitate the measurement of project progress and outcomes?.	10 points.
(3) Dissemination—Does the proposed project include clearly outlined and realistic mechanisms that will lead to widespread dissemination of project results, including national electronic communication systems, publications, presentations at professional conferences, and/or use by faculty development or research/teaching skills workshops.	10 points.
(4) Partnerships and collaborative efforts—Will the project expand partnership ventures among disciplines at a university, between colleges and universities, or with the private sector? Will the project lead to long-term relationships or cooperative partnerships that are likely to enhance program quality or supplement resources available to food and agricultural sciences higher education?.	20 points.
(c) <i>Institutional commitment and resources:</i> This criterion relates to the institution's commitment to the project and the adequacy of institutional resources available to carry out the project.	
(1) Institutional commitment—Is there evidence to substantiate that the institution attributes a high-priority to the project, that the project is linked to the achievement of the institution's long-term goals, that it will help satisfy the institution's high-priority objectives, or that the project is supported by the institution's strategic plans?.	10 points.
(2) Institutional resources—Will the project have adequate support to carry out the proposed activities? Will the project have reasonable access to needed resources such as instructional instrumentation, facilities, computer services, library and other instruction support resources?.	10 points.
(d) <i>Key personnel:</i> This criterion relates to the number and qualifications of the key persons who will carry out the project. Are designated project personnel qualified to carry out a successful project? Are there sufficient numbers of personnel associated with the project to achieve the stated objectives and the anticipated outcomes?	20 points.
(e) <i>Budget and cost-effectiveness:</i>	

Evaluation Criterion	Weight
This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost-effective.	
(1) Budget—Is the budget request justifiable? Are costs reasonable and necessary? Will the total budget be adequate to carry out project activities? Are the source(s) and amount(s) of non-Federal matching support clearly identified and appropriately documented? For a joint project proposal, is the shared budget explained clearly and in sufficient detail?	10 points.
(2) Cost-effectiveness—Is the proposed project cost-effective? Does it demonstrate a creative use of limited resources, maximize educational value per dollar of USDA support, achieve economies of scale, leverage additional funds or have the potential to do so, focus expertise and activity on a targeted need area, or promote coalition building for current or future ventures?	10 points.
(f) <i>Overall quality of proposal:</i> This criterion relates to the degree to which the proposal complies with the application guidelines and is of high quality. Is the proposal enhanced by its adherence to instructions (table of contents, organization, pagination, margin and font size, the 20-page limitation, appendices, etc.); accuracy of forms; clarity of budget narrative; well prepared vitae for all key personnel associated with the project; and presentation (are ideas effectively presented, clearly articulated, and thoroughly explained, etc.)?	10 points.

### Subpart F—Supplementary Information

#### § 3405.16 Access to peer review information.

After final decisions have been announced, CSREES will, upon request, inform the project director of the reasons for its decision on a proposal. Verbatim copies of summary reviews, not including the identity of the peer reviewers, will be made available to respective project directors upon specific request.

#### § 3405.17 Grant awards.

(a) *General.* Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the authorized departmental officer shall make project grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose proposals are judged most meritorious in the announced targeted need areas under the evaluation criteria and procedures set forth in this part. The beginning of the project period shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support. All funds granted under this part shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations of this part, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations (7 CFR part 3019).

(b) *Organizational management information.* Specific management information relating to a proposing institution shall be submitted on a one-time basis prior to the award of a project grant identified under this part if such information has not been provided previously under this or another program for which the sponsoring agency is responsible. Copies of the forms used to fulfill this requirement will be sent to the proposing institution by the sponsoring agency as part of the pre-award process.

(c) *Notice of grant award.* The grant award document shall include at a minimum the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization.
- (2) Title of project.
- (3) Name(s) and address(es) of project director(s).
- (4) Identifying grant number assigned by the Department.
- (5) Project period, which specifies how long the Department intends to support the effort without requiring re-application for funds.
- (6) Total amount of Federal financial assistance approved during the project period.
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the grant is awarded.
- (8) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the grant award.
- (9) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by the Department to carry out its granting activities or to accomplish the purpose of this particular project grant.